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Meadow-Lark
and Other Poems

BY
JENNIE KIEFER



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LOS ANGELES

MEADOW-LARK
AND OTHER POEMS

BY
JENNIE KIEFER

PUBLISHED BY
The Parsifal Press
LOS ANGELES

DEDICATED TO
ALL FRIENDS OF THE
MEADOW-LARK

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M E A D O W - L A R K !

Meadow-lark, in beauty dressed –
Wood-brown coat and primrose vest,
Loving meadows wide and sweet,
Where no arching branches meet,
Naught to check thine upward gaze,
Through the long, bright summer days.
Is it world-old pain that wells,
In thy heart 'neath asphodels?
Did thy love from English lane,
Soar to heaven on liquid strain?
Seeks thy heart in song relief
Lest the meadows know thy grief?
Would'st thou lure, by that sweet note,
Sky-lark love from clouds remote?—
Ease thy heart with that refrain,
Flute-like: "She will come again!"

THE FORTRESS-CASTLE

Its peaceful grandeur, age on age,
The ruined castle shows;
Nor warder's call, nor arrow's flight
Assails its deep repose.

The rooks that circle wide at dawn
Home trend with waning light,
And broken tower and donjon keep
Are hearthstone loved at night.

The ivy presses heart to heart
The walls that knighthood reared,
And clasps in loving arms each stone
That valorous souls endeared.

And age on age, like rooks that throng,
Trend knightly hearts in quest
Of shrines, where glorious valour dwelt,
And love that valour blessed.

L U N A

From wondrous temple of the Sun,
The Earth with Luna fled;
Through darkest night, o'er ether plains
The radiant wanderers sped.

Nine times ten-million miles were told,
Since loud the temple rang,
And brazen gates were outward flung
Then shut with thunderous clang.

Still with the joy of ways untried,
And youth, and hearts of fire,
The wanderers, self-illumed and free,
Nor time nor space could tire.

But distance dimmed the altar-glow –
All noble souls are true –
And now the wanderers' faltering hearts
The exile's anguish knew.

When strong wills yield, the hour
has struck
For Primal Power to guide;

And being, led by unseen hand,
Finds naught of worth denied.
Four times ten-million years are told,
Still Earth with Luna sweet
O'er primrose pathway through the skies,
The vows of youth repeat.
The ardent Earth, Time's record keeps
In beauteous Seasons' flight;
And Luna's face, in liliated grace,
Reflects the altar-light.

THE ARCHER

The Archer bent his strongest bow
And deftly launched his keenest dart,
The shining barb with keen intent
Plunged deep into a steel-chilled heart.
The cleavage of that chilled-steel heart
No art nor dart before had found,
Small wonder, then, that panic spread
Through inky pages, vellum bound,—
That Blackstone tumbled from his shelf,
And dust-grimed tomes were thundering hurled,
That chaos reigned and ruin spread;
Such cause, ere this, had wrecked
a world.

.

The carnage, pillage, conflict o'er,
Aloft enthroned sat Cupid's self;
While Attic sage, in happiest mood,
Kicked Law and Blackstone 'neath
the shelf.

(One of the finest armored cruisers of the United States navy is to make the run from San Francisco around the Horn to the Atlantic fleet. But the trip will not arouse the world like the journey of the Oregon during the Spanish-American war, with Captain Clark on the bridge. That was an epoch-making journey.

White heat, and hammer's smothering
blows,

And now in San Francisco's Bay
An armored cruiser rides,
Who waits impatient for the bells
That chant for swelling tides.

Far out ! sealed orders bid the stress,
No power that helps nor bars;

Alone on ocean's shoreless waste,
No convoy but the stars.

A nation's message! Noble ship,
Guard well the written scroll,
Ten thousand miles of stubborn seas
Between thee and thy goal.

Sea-mountains rise, her course to stay,
Then swing and lash and wrack,
To wreath their garlands, sea-foam white,
And fling them round her track.

Soft, luring airs from Tropic Isles
With siren sweets are sent
O'erwhelming all the sense and soul,
Like spice with attar blent.

Then gales sweep on in fearful might,
The heavens and waters reel,
And stricken seas and stricken hearts
The Powers of Darkness feel.

Now well for thee, O valiant ship,
By wave and tempest tried,

Thy builder spurned the rotten steel
As thou the seething tide.

No broken screws nor sluing bolts,
To make thy timbers start;
Each gliding shaft with joy obeys
Thine engine's throbbing heart.

In southern seas where ice-fleets launch,
Beneath the Southern Cross,
An omen from the skies descends:
The white-winged albatross.

Magellan's tortuous Strait is won,
Again the wide seas bound,
Again the midnight watcher lone
The North-star's light has found.

Now foes may lurk, a hostile fleet
In sheltering waters bides,
And warily her armored breast
The leaden seas divides.

The goal is reached where Moro's rock
Defiant greets the main

And alien hands rule alien hearts
Beneath the flag of Spain.

In sulphurous smoke the message speeds,
Writ large, the world to tell,
The light that makes the meaning plain
Is burning Christobel!

.

Her mission o'er, the Oregon,
All samite-robed, elate,
Turns westward to beloved shores,
And far-off Golden Gate!

OUR BOBBIE

(The author prizes greatly the following charming note of acknowledgement from Admiral Robley D. Evans:—

"Dear Mrs. Kiefer,- Please accept my thanks for the very graceful and beautiful lines you were good enough to send me.

"Sincerely yours,

"R. D. Evans.")

U. S. Esquire one mornin' -

Havin' grown so big and grand
That by lookin' twice or three times
Couldn't see across his land -

Said to Mr. Bob, his boatman:

"Jes' sail around and see
If my farms, plantations, ranches,
Are as safe as safe can be,

"For I don't want any crowdin',
Any poachin' on my land,
By neighbors 'cross the ocean,
Mr. Bob, you understand!"

And Mr. Bob, he sabè'd,
Like one Dewey that he knew,
And bucklin' up some war-ships,

Went a sailin' of the blue.
Our Bobbie sailed, and sailin'
Dropped his anchor at the door
Of many a friendly neighbor,
That had greeted him before.
Oh! the fleet was all so gallant,
And the scene was all so new,
That Magellan's Strait jes' widened,
Fur to let the gunners through.
Our Bobbie shot at targets
Till the skies were reekin' black,
And the neighbors – 'cross the ocean –
Smilin' – took another – tack!
Bobbie Evans, you're commander
Of a fleet that's hard to beat,
Your flag-ship sails straight through our
hearts,
Your victory is complete!

T. R.

Tell the news the good world 'round,
Teddy Roosevelt's homeward bound!

Heart within his hand he brings,
Warm for commons as for kings.

Wearing neither badge nor sign
Of his rank or creed or line;

Just a wise and honest man,
Built on Freedom's finished plan.

Loving toil and loving strife,
On the San Juan hills of life;

Blazing trails through jungles' might
To the broad veldt's air and light;

Purpose high, and aim as true
As the Afric lion knew;

Dealing fair and square and right--
Just a great soul, in its might

Helping on the nobler plan
Of the brotherhood of man.

THE CHAUFFEUR

No longer on the "Field of Mars"

Alone, are heroes bred;

No longer 'neath the heel of war

Alone, the turf is red, —

For chauffeur hosts are charging down,—

The wayside flowers are red —

The wage of battle fills the land:

The dying and the dead.

San Gabriel's horn the echoes wakes,

On highways near and far

Stand wide! a conquering hero comes

Triumphant in his car!

No space on earth for careless feet,

Where sleuth-like autos roam;

To cross their path means quick dispatch

To your *eternal* home.

THE FLAG ON THE COURT-HOUSE

It dips its colors to the dawn,
It hails all winds that blow,
And ruddier in the western light
Its bars of valor glow.

The patriot's lifted gaze discerns
The blue, the red, the white,
But shot through field and stars and bars
With Freedom's golden light.

Re-visioned, it is Valley Forge,
'Tis Yorktown, Brandywine,
'Tis Washington, 'tis Lafayette,
'Tis patriots' marching line.

'Tis Freedom lifted to the skies,
Pre-visioned Patriots saw,
'Tis Freedom, Liberty – restrained
By halyards of the Law.

MR. SUNSHINE

Mr. Sunshine! Mr. Sunshine!!

Please to tumble out of bed,
Bundle up your cloudy bed-clothes,
Pitch them at the mountain's head.

O you dear old rosy Sunshine!

Come to breakfast, come *to stay*,
Life is drear when you're not with us!
From your sweet-heart,

Miss L. A.

SILVER BELLS

All night the snow fell thick and fast,
The skies their gentle burden cast
On boughs and roofs and home-walled
streets,
Where traffic toils and pleasure fleets;
Then o'er the carded whiteness threw
A sheen more rare than art e'er knew,
When Dawn from cloister, fair and young,
The gates of Darkness backward flung,
The world in dazzling beauty spread,
And Day went forth with muffled tread;
Then, sweeter far than language tells,
Rang out the chime of silver bells.
What bells within my heart keep time
When sweet strung-bells of silver chime?
Some morn, far off, my heart will know
Why silver chimes such joy bestow.
In far-off skies where rapture dwells
I'll hear once more those silver bells.

DRIFT-WOOD

[Dedicated to L. S.]

The light boat, like a cygnet, dipped
To blue Mendota's wave,
And youthful vikings sought the coves
Mendota's waters lave, —

For wind and wave, free-booters wild,
Had gathered drift-wood store,
And into coves and inlets deep
Their garnered treasure bore.

Not fairer, Ellen of the Isle
Than she, whose light oar plied
In time to kinsman's lengthened stroke,
O'er waters deep and wide.

They gathered faggots, lichen'd o'er
With woodland memories dear,
And homeward bore, with toiling oar,
For wide hearth's evening cheer.

When frosts and shadows closer crept,
In crackling driftwood blaze

To light and life once more came forth
The scenes of by-gone days.

From Black Hawk Point the deer, pursued,
In beauty cleft the wave,
And darkling waters joyous leapt,
The antlered life to save.

The muskrat builded strong and well
His castle, moated deep;
And safely slept, a baron bold,
Within his donjon keep.

With lore of wood, the birch canoe
Was fashioned strong and light;
With Indian craft, the arrow-heads
Outsped the wild bird's flight.

The springtime came with glorious life,
And call like wood-dove loud
A wild heart heard, and dusky cheek
Outshone the sunset cloud.

The Indian summers came and went,
The harvest moons grew bold,

The giant forests cast their shields
And dared the winter's cold;
The Seasons brought their full-armed gifts
From forest, field and waves;
And wild and sweet, the life that beat
Around these Indian graves.

.

The drift-wood smoldered, whitened, fell;
The Night Wind downward crept,
And from the hearth, with gentle hand,
The furrowed ashes swept.

Then Helen's dreaming heart beheld
A scene most dear – the last –
Like smoke of Peace-Pipe drifted wide –
The Spirit of the Past.

BLUE DRAGON-OCEAN

With breathings deep and bellowings on
the shore,

Blue Dragon-Ocean clutches at the land,
And seeks to drag to protoplasmic night
All patient Time has wrought, or destined
being planned.

Chained by a law, eternal and serene,
It strains its fettered limbs when full moon
bides,

The strong will breaks on headlands bleak
and bold,

Then foiled and beaten, raging, backward
glides.

Its dazzling helmet rests where ice-floes
start,

Where Arctic monsters range, and penguin
calls,

Where quivering Boreal-lights wield vigils
keep

And deck in fearful splendor vast celestial
walls.

To far Antarctic bourne it sinuous wends,
Where petrel screams, whose soul is tem-
pest-tossed,
Lest 'mid the waste of Polar nights and
snows,
Its all of light and life, its one dear mate is
lost.

Its scales are blinding in the noon-day sun,
At morn and eve the steel-blue armor
gleams;
From it, when silvered by the moonlight
pale
And gemmed with countless stars, un-
earthly beauty streams.

Lashed by sirrocco's breath, or fell simoom
Its heavy undulous bulk resents the blow,
And mountainous heavings show the
Dragon's blood
In warmer currents through arterial gulf-

streams flow.

When Trade-winds wild o'er trackless
highways fleet,
And ships go down to night and rayless
day,
No more the Dragon heeds the loss and
wreck,
Than were it gliding seal, or dolphin at his
play.

Anon the angered heavens reach down to
smite,
And sabers flash, and thunderous blows
resound,
Far off the tumult rolls, the armor's clang
Ensanguined heavens proclaim how wide
the Dragon's wound.

When every grain of sand on every shore
In glass of Time its heavenly message
brings,

The Dragon-Ocean, free, unchained, shall
soar,
Transmuted up to Heaven, on wide-spread
misty wings.

TEAL

Swift wings, and spirits free, that love
Through ether fields to roam,
And nestling close when night comes
down

Make sedgy pools thy home –

Take heed! The hunter marks thy flight,
Knows where thy hearth-fires glow,
His lead may pierce thy gentle heart,
Forgive! *he loves thee so!*

THE LINNETS

Chilling winds of March were sweeping
O'er the misty sea and land;
Lost the sky-ways of the linnet,
Lost the sea-gull's Lovers' Strand.

'Neath my window in the shadows
Where the hedge and palings meet,
Sconced in jeweled cypress leafage,
Lissome voices wafted sweet.

Little wings had found a roof-tree, —
Sheltered safe from storm and night,
Wistful hearts could wait in patience
For *tomorrow's* warmth and light.

A DAY IN JUNE

Steel-clad the Dawn, – a mail-ed knight
For tourney, joust, or valor bound;
High heart and warm, our Launcelot,
"Best-loved of all our table-round."

High Noon, and chaliced Eshcol wine
Is poured o'er mountain, wold and
mere,
Entrancing airs o'erwhelm and bless,
Day dies – our "matchless Guinevere."

LESSONS

I come, O ways of spring, to greet
The tulip, crocus, asphodel,
To bind my soul with loving touch
To glories which their beauties tell.

.

O Winds of night, your unbound mantles
brush

My spirit, toiling upward through the dark;
I know your anguish and your deep unrest,
Your earth-life longing for the Perfect Day.

.

O little brook, in lessons deep and wide
Your swift and yielding ways my soul in-
struct:

Never in stagnant pools your spirit bides,
But forths to greater being, greater bliss.

.

Beloved Hills, you too have felt
The cosmic fires, fierce and pent;
But now for you the lifted dawn,
For you is lengthened glory sent.

.

O Autumn spirit, now the meaning plain
Of husbandry of sunshine, breeze and rain
In treasure-seeking roots, and upward-
gleaming grain.

P A S S I N G

The temple was deserted. The High Altar of the Heart was fallen! The casements whence the soul looked forth to bind or loose, to bless or ban, were closed and barred.

The erstwhile ministrant with swift and noiseless footsteps had departed, leaving no tidings – whence the command, whither the journeying, when the hoped return.

Sometime votary, blinded and stunned, groping like Nydia with extended hand, fain would detain by force or pleadings the departing soul.

The yielding wall let in the cool, embracing, silent air.

Silent all answering things when Light and Life and Love wreathed arms: the sunlit hills, enfolding vales, the welcoming uplands flung with cloth-of-gold,

the living rocks climbing to heaven, close
breath of pine, wide-spread or folded wing,
swift messenger from flower to flower, the
censer-swinging breeze, – all dumb, apart,
as if the soul of all things too had fled.

.

Death is common? Ay, plenteous as
the stars; but in the Passing, to the riven
soul, a tidal wave engulfs the world, and
leaves it tenantless.

MY RELIGION

O Soul that bears with seeming loss,
For kindred souls the heavy cross,—
Like one who gathered to his heart
The spears which made the life-blood start,
That rubies from his affluent veins
Might ransom Liberty in chains —
Hast thou in time the meaning guessed,
Of bruised feet and wounded breast?
Tell o'er the scheme of life, and show
Why hearts must bleed, why tears must
flow.

"The seed will be a seed, till sun
And soil and rain their work have done;

"In branch and leaf and flower expressed
Is meaning in the seed confessed.

"Take heed, for in thy being dwells
The need which every change compels.

"Perhaps for thee, the earthquake shock,
The lightning-bolt, the hidden rock.

"Whate'er the cost, *thyself must know*
The lesson taught in joy and woe.

"Perfected being, is the quest –
The goal – of every earth-bound guest."

L O V E

Love wrought, and Toil forgot the load,
Forgot the heavy stinging goad.

Love wrought, and Sorrow joyous sped,
Where rocks had torn and thorns had bled.

Love wrought, and back from wrong and
blame
With heart of gold the wandering came.

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